

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Jewish Autonomous Oblast

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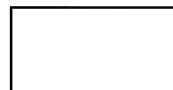
SOURCE:

1. The Jewish Autonomous Oblast, with its capital at Birobidzhan, has never been a truly Jewish area. At best, ten to fifteen percent of the population has been Jewish. Source stated that, for purposes of show, a few kolkhozy were organized in the oblast in the late 1930s. This was a failure, however, because Jews living in the western USSR did not want to farm or move eastward to Birobidzhan. Some Jews were persuaded to migrate eastward, however, where they soon settled down as department store employees, watchmakers, bartenders, and minor Party and governmental functionaries. In general, the Jews made up the mercantile class of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. As recently as 1948, newspapers in the area listed the names of distinguished kolkhozniki from the Jewish Autonomous Oblast; these were typical Russian names such as Ivanov or Petrov.
2. In June or July 1948, the Khabarovskiy Kray Party Secretary and the local MGB chief, Colonel General Goglidze, received instructions from Moscow to organize a purge of the Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast administration. Later in summer 1948, the purge was effected. Source obtained this information from Colonel Paramonov (fnu), the former MGB personnel chief in the Soviet Far East, who was well-placed to report on such information.
3. As a result of this purge, Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast were fired and replaced by Great Russians or other nationalities from the European USSR. For example, the UMGB chief of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast was an unidentified Jew who was replaced by Lt. Col. Nikolenko (fnu). A complete shuffle extended into the Party and administration of the oblast. This purge was kept silent and was not reported in the press or on the radio.
4. In 1948, source observed many US goods in Birobidzhan. This was primarily clothing, sent by an American Jewish relief organization. The goods were sold in State stores, which reflected approval of the sale by the government. There were no private sales. Source theorized that the materials were confiscated in

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transit by the Soviet Government, and placed into State store inventories. The sale prices of these items were extremely low.

5. The myth of a private area existing for Soviet Jews in the USSR has been pretty well exploded throughout the USSR. Non-Jews and Jews alike realize that the Jewish Autonomous Oblast was neither Jewish, nor autonomous, nor an oblast.

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